

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 L-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 NSC-10 NSCE-00 DODE-00 DRC-01 /055 W

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R 080332Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1487

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8265

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES RE PARK GOVERNMENT

REF: SEOUL 8261

1. ON DECEMBER 7 NCC GENERAL SECRETARY KIM KWAN-SUK TOLD EMBOFF THAT KOREAN CHURCH LEADERS ARE WATCHING GOVERNMENT REFORMS AND MORE MODERATE APPROACH TOWARD STUDENTS AND CHURCHES WITH KEEN INTEREST. HOWEVER, HE SAID CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE LITTLE FAITH IN PERMANENCY OF ROKG POLICY CHANGES.

2. AMONG CONCILIATORY ROKG GESTURES, KIM CITED RELEASE OF IMPRISONED STUDENTS, END OF CHURCH AND STUDENT SURVEILLANCE BY ROK CIA. GREATER FREEDOM OF PRESS TO REPORT CHURCH PROTESTS, AND CURRENT INITIATIVE BY PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG-PIL TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH CHURCH LEADERS (REFTEL).

3. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO REV KIM, CHURCH POSITION TOWARD GOVERNMENT REMAINS ONE OF DEEP DISTRUST. HE BELIEVES THAT ROKG RELAXATION IS ONLY TEMPORARY AND THAT WITH GROWING ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES DUE TO ENERGY CRISIS AND RESULTING POPULAR DISCONTENT, ROKG, WHATEVER ITS PRESENT DESIRES, WILL AGAIN FIND ITSELF FORCED TO TIGHTEN POLITICAL CONTROLS TO CUT OFF CRITICISM.

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4. IN KIM'S VIEW, PRIMIN HAS BEEN MADE RESPONSIBLE FOR NEW LIBERAL INTERNAL POLICIES. CHURCHMEN HAVE GREATER RESPECT FOR PRIMIN THAN PARK. HOWEVER, KIM BELIEVES PRIMIN WILL FAIL AND WILL THEN HAVE TO SHOULDER RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE. THEREFORE CHURCHES CAN NOW ACCEPT NOTHING LESS THAN CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WHICH WILL GUARANTEE NEW FREEDOMS ON MORE LASTING BASIS THAN PRESIDENT PARK'S WHIM. PRESIDENT PARK WILL NOT ACCEPT SUCH CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS, IN KIM'S OPINION.

5. REV KIM SAID HE IS THEREFORE WORKING FOR NOTHING LESS THAN DOWNFALL OF PARK GOVERNMENT. CHURCH LEADERS ARE AWARE THAT IF PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS BROUGHT DOWN BY PROTESTS AND SHOW OF DISCONTENT, MILITARY DICTATORSHIP MAY FOLLOW. KIM SAID HE AT LEAST IS WILLING TO TAKE RISK IN HOPE THAT MORE ENLIGHTENED ALTERNATE LEADERSHIP MAY BE FORTHCOMING. KIM THINKS THAT PRIMIN OR KIM TAE JONG MAY BE POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO PARK, DESPITE HIS RESERVATIONS ABOUT BOTH MEN.

6. REGARDING STUDENTS, REV KIM SAID CHURCH WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THEIR PROTESTS AND WILL ENCOURAGE THEM TO MEET ON CHURCH PREMISES TO PREPARE FOR SPRING PROTEST CAMPAIGN AGAINST GOVERNMENT. IN MEANTIME, HOWEVER, HE EXPECTS PUBLIC STUDENT PROTESTS ON STREETS AND CAMPUSES TO SUBSIDE.

7. REV KIM TOLD EMBOFF THAT CHURCH ALSO PLANS TO MOVE MORE SERIOUSLY INTO LABOR FIELD AND ORGANIZE WORKERS MORE EFFECTIVELY. (ON CATHOLIC SIDE, SOCIAL ACTION ORIENTED WONJU BISHOP CHI HAS JUST ASSUMED CHAPLAINCY OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS MOVEMENT (JOC) INDICATING LIKELIHOOD GREATER MILITANCE AND PROTEST ACTION THERE.) COMMENT: REV KIM, AS HE STATES, IS COMMITTED TO REMOVAL OF PRESIDENT PARK. HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN OUT IN FRONT OF OTHER CHURCH LEADERS IN PAST MONTHS IN OPPOSING GOVERNMENT.

8. AT MINIMUM KIM'S COMMENTS SHOW THE DEPTH OF ALIENATION PERSISTING IN SOME CHRISTIAN CIRCLES. GIVEN SUCH ATTITUDES AND THE GROWING PUBLIC CONCERNS ABOUT ECONOMIC SITUATION, THE GOVERNMENT FACES MAJOR OBSTACLES, DESPITE NEW APPROACH OF CONTROLLED MODERATION. THE GOVERNMENT MEASURES ANNOUNCED IN THE LAST WEEK, LAUDABLE AS THEY ARE, SHOULD BE VIEWED AS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS NECESSARY TO REESTABLISH PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE

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GOVERNMENT.  
UNDERHILL

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## Message Attributes

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